

Johnson's War

The White House meetings that addressed the problem of new troop commitments to Vietnam extended over a period of a week during the latter part of July. This was the most searching examination yet made of where we were and where we should go. The press, with not a little encouragement from the White House, painted a picture of options advanced, carefully examined, retained for further consideration, or dismissed out of hand. According to this portrayal, the final decision represented the best judgment of the President after his exposure to the views and arguments of his key military and civilian advisers. Pains were taken to emphasize that the "dovish" briefs of Under-Secretary George Ball, as well as those of the "hawkish" military, were put forward.

Many government officials close to the developments of that week are convinced that the image of a soul-searching and agonizing examination of alternatives, including the option of cutting our losses and pulling out, was an accurate reflection of what actually occurred. They believe if one or two senior participants had joined George Ball in opposing new troop deployments, the President might have been induced to think through the issue of whether more troops should be sent, rather than simply worrying about how many. There are others who feel the President almost certainly knew by the end of the first day's discussion, and perhaps

even before the meeting started, what he planned to do, but it suited his purpose and his style to give the impression that he was engaging in a lengthy and thorough appraisal in which all points of view were advanced and weighed. To back up their position they maintain the decision had been reached earlier by McNamara when he conferred with senior military officers in Honolulu on his way home from Vietnam. It is my belief that the issue of additional deployments was already resolved; the only question was how many troops the President felt he could commit.

The 75,000 American troops then in Vietnam were now a hostage. They represented too large a force to pull out without a tremendous loss of prestige, yet they were too small a combat force (most were engineering or supply troops) to take over the burden of the fighting from the clearly ineffectual South Vietnamese forces. The President lost nothing by letting George Ball play the role of devil's advocate; it was actually useful to give the impression that disengagement was being seriously discussed.

As the meetings went on and the time of decision became more imminent, the number of participants got smaller and smaller. The President, with his deep concern for secrecy, eventually met with only a few of his most senior advisers. On the 27th of July Johnson briefed selected members of Congress on his decision, and on the 28th he revealed it to the American people.

American fighting forces in Vietnam, the President told a nationwide television audience, would be increased from the present level of 75,000 to 125,000 men almost immediately, and further increases would be ordered if the situation required. It would not be necessary, he said, to call up the reserves, but over a period of time draft quotas would be raised from 17,000 to 35,000 a month. The President emphasized that the increase in troop deployments was in response to General Westmoreland's request. "I have asked the Commanding General, General Westmoreland, what more he needs to meet this mounting aggression. He has told me. We will meet his needs." His speech included, once again, a statement of his readiness to negotiate a political settlement, although he reminded his listeners that all his previous efforts had been rejected by North Vietnam and China. "Fifteen efforts have been

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effort, a half-dozen junior officers and some forty civilians, mostly Catholics, were arrested. According to the official charges, the plotters had planned to assassinate Premier Quat and to kidnap General Thi and Air Marshal Ky. To the majority of observers, it looked as if the government had initiated the action, in anticipation of a coup by Thao, and had fabricated at least some of the charges. It was particularly doubtful that Dr. Quat was scheduled to be assassinated, although his personal bodyguard had been suborned. Several of the fifty-odd people arrested were known supporters of Thao, who had played key roles in the previous coup effort, and one of the military men apprehended was the head of the military security section, who had been protecting Thao in his movements around the city. Another officer, a captain who had been sentenced to twenty years' imprisonment in absentia for his part in the February 19th coup, was shot and killed trying to escape from civilian police in the round-up. Colonel Thao again managed to evade arrest. A price of \$30,000 was now placed on his head.*

If Thao's alleged second "coup" was indeed phony and represented an attempt by General Thi and his group to crush Thao and his co-conspirators, it did not succeed in subduing the Catholics. Within a week or so, Catholic pressure mounted against Quat, and Father Quynh's militants were openly seeking the government's overthrow, charging Quat with being incompetent and with "plotting with the colonialists [i.e., the French] to negotiate," which was commensurate in falsity with Quat's similar accusation against the Catholic "coup" leaders. Various Catholic delegations regularly began visiting the office of Chief of State Suu to present resolutions calling for Dr. Quat's ouster, and they obtained the support of some Hoa Hao and Cao Dai sect representatives. The issue had now come to a head over some Cabinet changes Dr. Quat wanted to make in order to bring more southerners into the government. The Premier's motives were

* In July, 1965, Thao was captured near the Bien Hoa airbase north of Saigon, after he was betrayed by one of the generals he had formerly worked with. He was wounded by Security Forces and taken to Saigon, where he was strangled to death in a hospital by agents of his enemies—the generals who were afraid of him. His loss to Vietnam, to my mind, was tragic. In a letter to an American friend, a few days earlier, he had written of the need for a form of "humanitarian Socialism" to curb Communism in Vietnam.

honorable enough, but he had spent so much time trying to placate the generals that he had made the mistake of forgetting about the need to maintain close relations with Chief of State Suu. When two of the five Cabinet members Dr. Quat wanted to have resign refused to do so, Suu backed their refusal as "legal." The Catholics quickly took advantage of the differences between Suu and Dr. Quat to push their attack against the Quat regime. On June 9th, Dr. Quat paved the way for his own ouster by asking the generals "to play the role of mediators" in his dispute with Suu. He apparently expected the generals to support him against Suu, but three days later the generals forced Dr. Quat to resign and again took over the South Vietnamese government.

The United States, while it had supported Dr. Quat and had hoped that he might be able to weather the storm, was "gratified" that the new change-over had at least been accomplished peacefully. The Embassy urged the generals to set up a new government as quickly as possible, particularly in view of the serious war situation, and, somewhat forlornly, it requested that it be kept better informed than it had been about the various negotiations that were going on among the generals, the politicians, and the religious leaders. Once again, Ambassador Taylor had been out of the country when a government fell; he was back in Washington reporting to President Johnson. The generals quickly established a new National Leadership Committee, headed by General Nguyen Van Thieu, who had been Defense Minister. The forty-two-year-old Thieu, a moderate converted Roman Catholic who had been involved in the 1964, Dai Viet Party coup attempts, had fought with the French against the Vietminh during the Indochina war and had worked his way up slowly through the Army chain of command. He was considered to have the best chance of keeping peace among the generals and of obtaining the support of the two main religious groups. Initially, Air Marshal Ky and General Nguyen Huu Co, commander of the II Corps, joined Thieu on the National Leadership Committee, but this triumvirate was then increased to ten members, including General Thi. General Co was named Commissioner General of the armed forces—in effect, commander in chief—and the thirty-five-year-old Air Marshal Ky was

given supervision of a new Executive Council, in charge of the day-by-day administration of the country. A dispute immediately arose as to whether Ky would also become chairman of the Executive Council, which was in effect a "war Cabinet," and thus be cast in the role of Premier. The Americans, who regarded Ky as a satisfactory Air Force officer but doubted his political acumen or his administrative ability, sought to preclude Ky's appointment to the chairmanship, and relations between Ky and Ambassador Taylor became touchy in a manner reminiscent of Taylor's 1964 feud with General Khanh. The Buddhists and the Catholics also urged that a civilian chairman of the Executive Council be chosen, and religious leaders of both groups spoke out against the complete resumption of power by the military, even though the Catholics and some of the moderate Buddhists admitted that another civilian government might open the door to negotiation with the National Liberation Front. Nevertheless, Ky did become Premier. He immediately moved to emphasize the seriousness of the situation by announcing that Vietcong terrorists as well as black-marketeers, speculators, and corrupt officials would be summarily shot without trial if judged guilty, and a large outdoor execution area was blocked off in the Saigon central market to emphasize that they meant business. Ky also banned all newspapers for a time and made it clear that Saigon was to be considered in a state of siege, a condition he did not exaggerate since in a matter of weeks the capital was cut off by road from such nearby areas as the airbase at Bien Hoa, as well as from Dalat and the coast.

The war had indeed become serious. During May and June, in a series of swift, furious actions that involved multi-battalion attacks, counterattacks, ambushes, and counterambushes, the Vietcong had inflicted more punishment on the government troops, and on their American supporters, than in any comparable period in the war to date. During this time, an estimated thousand to fifteen hundred government soldiers had been killed or were missing, and some three dozen Americans lost their lives, in the ground fighting or in the air. For a period of six days in mid-May, after President Johnson made another speech in which he offered the North Vietnamese "unconditional discussions" and economic assistance, the United States suspended its

bombings of the north, in the hope that the Hanoi government would respond to the American offer in disregard of Chinese advice; but when no reaction was forthcoming, the bombing attacks were renewed, and targets closer to Hanoi were hit. No effort was made, however, to change the basic targets from bridges, roads, military barracks, and radar installations to factories, dikes, or airfields around Hanoi, where the Russians were reported to have sent some Ilyushin 28 bombers and to have begun building sites for ground-to-air missiles. In July, when one American plane was shot down, apparently by one of these missiles, the Americans did destroy one of the seven missile sites believed to have been set up around Hanoi.

Most of the fighting in South Vietnam was concentrated in the central highlands and on the coast, particularly in the provinces of Binh Dinh and Quang Ngai. The biggest battle, however, took place in mid-June in Dongxoi, in Phuoc Vinh Province, northwest of Saigon, where in a violent four-day fight government forces lost an estimated seven to eight hundred men, and nineteen Americans were killed. It was the largest engagement of the Vietnamese war, and for the first time American forces were committed to combat action when a battalion of American paratroopers flown in took up positions in support of the shattered Saigon troops. This followed by a few days the announcement by President Johnson that General Westmoreland, the American military commander in Vietnam, had been given permission to send American forces, then numbering more than 53,000 and including approximately 15,000 combat elements, into action in response to requests by the Vietnamese government. Actually, American Marines engaged in patrolling operations around their coastal bases had already fought some small engagements against the Vietcong, but the announcement by the President marked an open departure from the earlier American policy of non-engagement and made it clear that henceforth American soldiers would, whenever necessary, fight alongside the Vietnamese under a loose system of joint regional command, but in separate units. The President's disclosure was followed up by Secretary of Defense McNamara's announcement that six more American combat battalions, plus supporting units, would be sent to Vietnam, thereupon bringing the total American troop commitment

there to approximately 75,000, of which a third at the time were combat troops. McNamara said there was fresh evidence that the Vietcong had infiltrated nine regular battalions into South Vietnam, and he now estimated that the Vietcong had 65,000 "full time" or hard-core men fighting in the country, which was about 20,000 more than the Americans had been estimating only a week or so before. Whatever the "numbers game" that was played, it was apparent that the numerical edge held by the American and South Vietnamese forces over the Vietcong and North Vietnamese was somewhere between $3\frac{1}{2}$ and 4 to one, and that this was not enough to bring the war to a successful conclusion, even with planes and astonishingly effective scientific gadgets of detection, etc. It was obvious that the whole shape of the war had now been altered, that the North Vietnamese and the Vietcong were clearly intent on prosecuting their advantage to the utmost in gaining, if not complete victory in South Vietnam, at least an advantage that would enable them to hold the upper hand in any "discussions" or "negotiations" that took place. In the words of General Giap, the minimal aim of the Vietcong was not to fight to the bitter end but "only to the point that the enemy could be brought to the conference table and there defeated."

In the months that followed, a great deal of fierce fighting took place, and, though the Vietcong suffered heavy casualties, they also inflicted a tremendous amount of damage on the South Vietnamese and American forces. In following up the grabbing of the initiative at the battle of Dongxoi, a Vietcong regiment overran an important South Vietnamese post at Bagia, in Quang Ngai Province, destroyed a full South Vietnamese battalion in Binh Duong Province, and wiped out a Special Forces camp in Phuoc Long Province. As the Americans began pouring re-enforcements into the country, the Communists brazenly stepped up their offensive, laying siege to another Special Forces camp in the central plateau region and overrunning the district town of Daksut, in the same highlands area. At this crucial moment, as the Vietcong seemed to be striking at will everywhere and accompanying its military assaults with sabotage and acts of terror directed against such major airbases as

Danang and Bien Hoa and in Saigon itself, the American Marines won a vital and stirring victory on the Chulai peninsula, below Danang, where, on Operation Starlight, a sweeping action, they killed more than seven hundred Vietcong over several days. (Unfortunately, here as elsewhere where successful American actions took place, there were not enough forces to "hold" as well as "clear" the area, and once the Americans were gone, the Vietcong filtered back in; because of the need to guard bases, to rest troops, and to keep supplies moving as best they could, only about one third of the American divisions and brigades being shuttled into South Vietnam could actually be assigned to the fighting at a given time.) As the Americans demonstrated their willingness and ability to pursue the Vietcong and stand and fight them when they were found, other bloody battles took place. In October, 1965, the solid Vietcong base north of Saigon known as the Iron Triangle was attacked, accompanied by heavy B-52 bombing assaults, from planes based in Guam. Later that month, North Vietnamese troops, at least two regiments worth, began the siege of Pleime, in the highlands, and Americans and South Vietnamese threw them back in a bloody battle. Late in October and early November came the biggest battle of the war to date—the siege of Chu Prong, the massif to the west of Pleime, along the Cambodian border, which the Vietcong used as a sanctuary and which protected one of their vital supply routes. Heavy casualties were suffered by both sides—the Americans sustained more than 300 killed, but they and the South Vietnamese killed three North Vietnamese for every man killed of their combined losses, and the final number of Communists dead in ground action or as a result of bombing was estimated at between 1,500 and 2,000. The Vietcong and Hanoi claimed a "victory," and the reaction in the United States to the high rate of American casualties in a sense bore them out. During the last two months of the year, both sides suffered victories and defeats. Then came the Christmas truce, the pause in the bombings of the north, and President Johnson's big but unsuccessful world-wide peace offensive, followed by renewed fighting.

on their soil and that they will join no military alliances; (3) The internal affairs of South Vietnam must be settled in accordance with the program of the National Liberation Front; (4) The reunification of Vietnam must be settled by the Vietnamese themselves without outside interference. The most troublesome part of the statement turned on one word—the word *the* in a wrap-up sentence of the proposal: The Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam is of the view that the stand expounded above is “*the* basis” for a political settlement. Hanoi clinched this point in a concluding paragraph: “. . . any approach contrary to the above-mentioned stand is inappropriate.” This Four Point Proposal was the basis of Hanoi’s negotiating posture for years.

Washington might even have been able to accept the implications of Hanoi’s phrase “the basis,” but if so, major modifications would have been necessary in Point Three—the insistence that South Vietnamese problems would have to be resolved “in accordance with the program of the National Liberation Front.” • Some of the more flexible officials in Washington felt that with such modifications the North Vietnamese proposal was one the United States probably could live with, or at least could regard as a beginning of a dialogue. But Point Three, as stated, brushed aside the ideas and aspirations of any group other than the NLF. If this were accepted as it stood, there would actually have been no need to negotiate a political settlement; the NLF would have been given carte blanche. Several staff officers in Washington, including myself, felt we should probe Hanoi’s views, and indeed

• Hanoi was referring in its Point Three to the National Liberation Front program that had been developed as far back as 1960. In summary form, the NLF Ten Points were (1) Overthrow the camouflaged colonial regime of the American imperialists and . . . Ngo Dinh Diem . . . and institute a government of national democratic union. (2) Institute a . . . liberal and democratic regime. (3) Establish an independent and sovereign economy, and improve the living conditions of the people. (4) Reduce land rent; implement agrarian reform. . . . (5) Develop a national and democratic culture and education. (6) Create a national army devoted to the defense of the Fatherland and the people. (7) Guarantee equality between the various minorities . . . protect the legitimate interests of foreign citizens established in Vietnam and of Vietnamese citizens residing abroad. (8) Promote a foreign policy of peace and neutrality. (9) Re-establish normal relations between the two zones, and prepare for the peaceful reunification of the country. (10) Struggle against all aggressive war; actively defend universal peace.

this was later done. We felt the United States should push hard for free elections in which all parties were permitted to contest freely, protected from terror and compulsion. This would, of course, have required an international policing mechanism (a strengthened International Control Commission or some other body). We argued that if these objectives coincided with the program of the National Liberation Front, we could accept Point Three. In short, we felt that, if we chose to make them so, Pham Van Dong’s proposals could provide a basis for exploratory talks, recognizing, however, that our experience in the Laos negotiations had shown the Communists to be allergic to effective international control, and that any progress in this direction would therefore be slow and tortuous.

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With the deployment of American combat troops, policymaking took on a new complexion. Up to this point the civilians, whether in the Department of State or Defense, played the leading roles in all policy discussions. Indeed the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Earle D. Wheeler, had frequently been excluded from many of the high-level meetings. Now that the security of American forces was involved, military participation in virtually every facet of our Vietnam involvement was taken for granted (although the President himself saw little or nothing of any senior military officers other than the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and the commanders of our forces in Vietnam).

Once given a legal hunting license, the Pentagon went after some big game. In the spring of 1965 the Joint Chiefs of Staff proposed that the military assume responsibility for a large part of the American AID programs in Vietnam’s rural areas. The proposition was that “Civil Affairs” teams, as in World War II, should be deployed throughout Vietnam to serve as integral parts of the provincial governments. Only the military, it was maintained, could bring together the necessary experts quickly enough to get the provincial administrations moving. Naturally enough the working levels in State, AID, and the White House strongly opposed this scheme. Aside from a feeling that the military was trying to

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invade sacred civilian territory, there were well-founded substantive concerns. Civil Affairs reservists were not necessarily trained to cope with the delicate political problems that confronted Americans in dealing with provincial officials. More importantly there was a queasy feeling that implicit in the Chiefs' proposal was the assumption that South Vietnam would be treated as an occupied enemy country. There was considerable steam behind the plan, however, and it might have been adopted had Ambassador Taylor not rejected the idea.

Another facet of the new military role in the policymaking process was the direct participation of the Commander of the American forces in the Pacific (CINCPAC). Until the bombing of North Vietnam had started in February, the American military establishment in Vietnam had been only nominally under CINCPAC command. The vast headquarters in Honolulu was hardly more than a post office and a message center for Vietnam operations, and serious consideration had been given during 1964 to eliminating CINCPAC from the chain of command between Washington and Saigon. When in late 1964 a senior military commander in Vietnam was asked for his judgment on whether the MACV should be placed directly under Washington command, he agreed that this made sense. Since CINCPAC was his "boss," however, he could not go on record with this view.

Although virtually every decision on Vietnam, even those affecting day-to-day operations, required Cabinet-level and Presidential approval during this period, one international development became so urgent as to temporarily divert the attention of the President and his senior advisers. This was the crisis in the Dominican Republic in late April, 1965. (The only other major diversion during the Johnson Administration was the Arab-Israeli war two years later.) For the brief period that the Caribbean received top priority, Vietnam specialists at the Department of State, and I at the White House, had a respite from the urgent summonses and the hot breaths of our various bosses, and could reflect on where we were going.

The situation in Vietnam did not stand still while Washington was concentrating on the Dominican Republic. Communist

strength had increased substantially during the first few months of 1965. By the end of April it was believed that 100,000 Viet Cong irregulars and between 38,000 and 46,000 main-force enemy troops, including a full battalion of regular North Vietnamese troops, were in South Vietnam. Meanwhile American combat forces were moving into South Vietnam at a rapid rate; in late April more than 35,000 American troops had been deployed and by early May the number had increased to 45,000. It was now clear that the President would have to seek a supplemental defense appropriation to meet the costs of American military operations. On May 4 he went to Congress with a request for an additional \$700 million. He used this occasion to assert that he would regard a vote for the appropriation as a vote of approval for the Administration's Vietnam policy. Since the decision to send American combat forces to Vietnam had already been made, and indeed many thousands of troops were already there, it would have been difficult for any legislator to vote against funds for their support. The President had pulled off a neat political ploy. In any case the House approved the new appropriation by a vote of 407 to 7, and the Senate approved it by a vote of 83 to 3. The President promptly interpreted this as he had said he would: "... each Member of Congress who supports this request is voting to continue our effort to try to halt Communist aggression."²⁰ He would refer to this, together with the Tonkin Resolution of the previous August, to document his case that he had given Congress the opportunity to approve or veto his Vietnam policy. The State Department Legal Adviser subsequently used the appropriations vote as well as the Joint Resolution to justify not asking Congress to approve American military involvement in Vietnam: "... the legality of United States participation in the defense of South Vietnam does not rest only on the constitutional power of the President under Article II. . . . the Congress has acted in unmistakable fashion to approve and authorize United States actions in Vietnam. Following the North Vietnamese attacks in the Gulf of Tonkin . . . Congress adopted . . . a Joint Resolution containing a series of important declarations and provisions of law. . . . Congress in May, 1965 approved an appropriation of \$700 million to

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Yet we took no action against the source of this brutality—North Viet-Nam.

When our destroyers were attacked in the Gulf of Tonkin, we replied with a single raid. The punishment was limited to the dead.

For the next 6 months we took no action against North Viet-Nam. We warned of danger; we hoped for caution in others.

The answer was attack, and explosions, and indiscriminate murder. It soon became clear that our restraint was viewed as weakness. Our desire to limit conflict was viewed as a prelude to surrender. We could no longer stand by while attack mounted, and while the bases of the attackers were immune from reply.

And so we began to strike back.

But we have not changed our essential purpose. That purpose is peaceful settlement. That purpose is to resist aggression. That purpose is to avoid wider war.

I say again that I will talk to any government, anywhere, and without any conditions; if any doubt our sincerity, let them test it.

Each time we have met with silence, slander, or the sound of guns.

But just as we will not flag in battle, we will not weary in the search for peace.

I reaffirm my offer of unconditional discussions. We will discuss any subject, and any point of view, with any government concerned.

This offer may be rejected, as it has been in the past. But it will remain open, waiting for the day when it becomes clear to all that armed attack will not yield domination over others. And I will continue along the course we have set: firmness with moderation, readiness for peace with refusal to retreat.

For this is the same battle which we have fought for a generation. Wherever we have stood firm, aggression has been halted, peace restored, and liberty maintained.

This was true under President Truman, President Eisenhower, and President Kennedy. And it will be true again in Southeast Asia.

74. ADDITIONAL APPROPRIATIONS TO MEET MOUNTING MILITARY REQUIREMENTS IN VIETNAM: Message From the President of the United States, May 4, 1965¹

To the Congress of the United States:

I ask the Congress to appropriate at the earliest possible moment an additional \$700 million to meet mounting military requirements in Vietnam.

This is not a routine appropriation. For each Member of Congress who supports this request is also voting to persist in our effort to halt Communist aggression in South Vietnam. Each is saying that the Congress and the President stand united before the world in joint determination that the independence of South Vietnam shall be preserved and Communist attack will not succeed.

In fiscal year 1965 we will spend about \$1.5 billion to fulfill our commitments in southeast Asia. However, the pace of our activity is steadily rising. In December 1961, we had 3,164 men in South Viet-

¹ H. Doc. 157, 89th Cong., 1st sess.

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nam. By the end of last week the number of our Armed Forces there had increased to over 35,000. At the request of the Government of South Vietnam in March, we sent Marines to secure the key Damang/Phu Bai area; 2 days ago, we sent the 173d Airborne Brigade to the important Bien Hoa/Vung Tau area. More than 400 Americans have given their lives in Vietnam.

In the past 2 years, our helicopter activity in South Vietnam has tripled—from 30,000 flying hours in the first quarter of 1963 to 90,000 flying hours in the first quarter of this year.

In February we flew 160 strike sorties against military targets in North Vietnam. In April, we flew over 1,500 strike sorties against such targets.

Prior to mid-February we flew no strike sorties inside South Vietnam. In March and April, we flew more than 3,200 sorties against military targets in hostile areas inside the country.

Just 2 days ago, we dispatched Gen. C. L. Milburn, Jr., Deputy Surgeon General of the Army, to assist U.S. representatives in Vietnam in formulating an expanded program of medical assistance for the people of South Vietnam. We are contemplating the expansion of existing programs under which mobile medical teams travel throughout the countryside providing on-the-spot medical facilities, treatment, and training in rural areas.

The additional funds I am requesting are needed to continue to provide our forces with the best and most modern supplies and equipment. They are needed to keep an abundant inventory of ammunition and other expendables. They are needed to build facilities to house and protect our men and supplies.

The entire \$700 million is for this fiscal year.

The Secretary of Defense will today support this request before the appropriate congressional committees.

Nor can I guarantee this will be the last request. If our need expands I will turn again to the Congress. For we will do whatever must be done to insure the safety of South Vietnam from aggression. This is the firm and irrevocable commitment of our people and Nation.

I have reviewed the situation in Vietnam many times with the Congress, the American people and the world. South Vietnam has been attacked by North Vietnam. It has asked our help. We are giving that help because our commitments, our principles, and our national interest demand it.

This is not the same kind of aggression with which the world has been long familiar. Instead of the sweep of invading armies, there is the steady, deadly stream of men and supplies. Instead of open battle between major opposing forces, there is murder in the night, assassination, and terror. Instead of dramatic confrontation and sharp division between nationals of different lands, some citizens of South Vietnam have been recruited in the effort to conquer their own country.

All of this shrouds battle in confusion. But this is the face of war in the 1960's. This is the "war of liberation." Kept from direct attack by American power, unable to win a free election in any country, those who seek to expand communism by force now use subversion and terror. In this effort they often enlist nationals of the countries they wish to conquer. But it is not civil war. It is sustained by power and resources from without. The very object of this tactic is

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to create the appearance of an internal revolt and to mask aggression. In this way, they hope to avoid confrontation with American resolution.

But we will not be fooled or deceived, in Vietnam or any place in the world where we have a commitment. This kind of war is war against the independence of nations. And we will meet it, as we have met other shifting dangers for more than a generation.

Our commitment to South Vietnam is nourished by a quarter century of history. It rests on solemn treaties, the demands of principle, and the necessities of American security.

A quarter century ago it became apparent that the United States stood between those who wished to dominate an entire continent and the peoples they sought to conquer.

It was our determined purpose to help protect the independence of the Asian peoples.

The consequence of our determination was a vast war which took the lives of hundreds of thousands of Americans. Surely this generation will not lightly yield to new aggressors what the last generation paid for in blood and towering sacrifice.

When the war was over, we supported the effort of Asian peoples to win their freedom from colonial rule. In the Philippines, Korea, Indonesia, and elsewhere we were on the side of national independence. For this was also consistent with our belief in the right of all people to shape their own destinies.

That principle soon received another test in the fire of war. And we fought in Korea, so that South Korea might remain free.

Now, in Vietnam, we pursue the same principle which has infused American action in the Far East for a quarter of a century.

There are those who ask why this responsibility should be ours. The answer is simple. There is no one else who can do the job. Our power is essential, in the final test, if the nations of Asia are to be secure from expanding communism. Thus, when India was attacked, it looked to us for help, and we gave it gladly. We believe that Asia should be directed by Asians. But that means each Asian people must have the right to find its own way, not that one group or nation should overrun all the others.

Make no mistake about it. The aim in Vietnam is not simply the conquest of the South, tragic as that would be. It is to show that American commitment is worthless. Once that is done, the gates are down and the road is open to expansion and endless conquest. That is why Communist China opposes discussions, even though such discussions are clearly in the interest of North Vietnam.

Moreover, we are directly committed to the defense of South Vietnam. In 1954 we signed the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty. That treaty committed us to act to meet aggression against South Vietnam. The U.S. Senate ratified that treaty and that obligation by a vote of 82 to 1.

Less than a year ago the Congress, by an almost unanimous vote, said that the United States was ready to take all necessary steps to meet its obligations under that treaty.

That resolution of the Congress expressed support for the policies of the administration to help the people of South Vietnam against attack—a policy established by two previous Presidents.

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Thus we cannot, and will not, withdraw or be defeated. The stakes are too high, the commitment too deep, the lessons of history too plain.

At every turning point in the last 30 years, there have been those who opposed a firm stand against aggression. They have always been wrong. And when we heeded their cries, when we gave in, the consequence has been more bloodshed and wider war.

We will not repeat that mistake. Nor will we heed those who urge us to use our great power in a reckless or casual manner. We have no desire to expand the conflict. We will do what must be done. And we will do only what must be done.

For, in the long run, there can be no military solution to the problems of Vietnam. We must find the path to peaceful settlement. Time and time again we have worked to open that path. We are still ready to talk, without conditions, to any government. We will go anywhere, discuss any subject, listen to any point of view in the interests of a peaceful solution.

I also deeply regret the necessity of bombing North Vietnam.

But we began those bombings only when patience had been transformed from a virtue into a blunder—the mistaken judgment of the attackers. Time and time again men, women, and children—Americans and Vietnamese—were bombed in their villages and homes while we did not reply.

There was the November 1 attack on the Bien Hoa airfield. There was the Christmas Eve bombing of the Brinks Hotel in Saigon. There was the February 7 attack on the Pleiku base. In these attacks 15 Americans were killed and 245 were injured. And they are only a few examples of a steady campaign of terror and attack.

We then decided we could no longer stand by and see men and women murdered and crippled while the bases of the aggressors were immune from reply.

But we have no desire to destroy human life. Our attacks have all been aimed at strictly military targets—not hotels and movie theaters and embassy buildings.

We destroy bridges, so it is harder to convey the instruments of war from north to south. We destroy radar stations to keep our planes from being shot down. We destroy military depots for the infiltration of men and arms to the south. We patrol routes of communications to halt the invaders. We destroy ammunition dumps to prevent the use of explosives against our men and our allies.

Who among us can feel confident that we should allow our soldiers to be killed, while the aggressor sits smiling and secure in his sanctuary, protected by a border which he has violated a thousand times. I do not believe that is the view of the American people or of the Congress.

However, the bombing is not an end in itself. Its purpose is to bring us closer to the day of peace. And whenever it will serve the interests of peace to do so, we will end it.

And let us also remember, when we began the bombings there was little talk of negotiations. There were few worldwide cries for peace. Some who now speak most loudly were quietly content to permit Americans and Vietnamese to die and suffer at the hands of terror without protest. Our firmness may well have already brought us closer to peace.

Our conclusions are plain.

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THE WHITE

75. SPEECH ECONOMY

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¹ Congressional

We will not surrender.

We do not wish to enlarge the conflict.

We desire peaceful settlement and talks.

And the aggression continues.

Therefore I see no choice but to continue the course we are on, filled as it is with peril and uncertainty.

I believe the American people support that course. They have learned the great lesson of this generation: Wherever we have stood firm aggression has been halted, peace restored, and liberty maintained.

This was true in Iran, in Greece and Turkey, and in Korea.

It was true in the Formosa Strait and in Lebanon.

It was true at the Cuban missile crisis.

It will be true again in southeast Asia.

Our people do not flinch from sacrifice or risk when the cause of freedom demands it. And they have the deep, abiding, true instinct of the American people: When our Nation is challenged it must respond. When freedom is in danger we must stand up to that danger. When we are attacked we must fight.

I know the Congress shares these beliefs of the people they represent.

I do not ask complete approval for every phase and action of your Government. I do ask for prompt support of our basic course: Resistance to aggression, moderation in the use of power, and a constant search for peace. Nothing will do more to strengthen your country in the world than the proof of national unity which an overwhelming vote for this appropriation will clearly show. To deny and delay this means to deny and delay the fullest support of the American people and the American Congress to those brave men who are risking their lives for freedom in Vietnam.

LYNDON B. JOHNSON.

THE WHITE HOUSE, May 4, 1965.

75. SPEECH BY PRESIDENT JOHNSON CONCERNING ECONOMIC AID TO SOUTH VIETNAM, MAY 13, 1965¹

Good morning ladies and gentlemen, and my friends of the Association of American Editorial Cartoonists. I am very happy that you requested through the press office this opportunity for us to meet together, because after looking at some of the cartoons you have drawn, I thought I'd invite you over to see me in person. After all, I had nothing to lose.

I know that I am talking to the most influential journalists in America. Reporters may write and politicians may talk but what you draw remains in the public memory long after these other words are forgotten. That is why, after I learned that you would be here and we would meet together that I put together some notes to discuss with you while you were in Washington, a very little-known side of our activity in one of the most vital places in the world—South Vietnam.

The war in Vietnam has many faces.

¹ Congressional Record, May 18, 1965, pp. A2459-A2460.

U.S. MAY MODIFY VIETNAM TACTICS

Coastal Enclaves Would Be
Defended and Extended.

By HANSON W. BALDWIN

United States ground combat forces in Vietnam, which are being gradually increased, may utilize an "inkblot" strategy in the war against the Vietcong. The concept would be based on offensive operations by United States troops in South Vietnam and a continuation of the bombings of North Vietnam unless the Hanoi regime indicated a willingness to negotiate an acceptable peace.

Military officers described the strategy, part of which is already being implemented, as the establishment of separate enclaves around strategic South Vietnamese coastal areas.

Each of these would be secured, as at Danang, by a firmly held perimeter defense established by United States ground combat forces. Gradually, as supplies and logistic facilities and combat strength were built up, each perimeter would be extended, and aggressive patrolling by larger and larger units would probe deeper and deeper into the countryside in "clear-and-hold" operations.

Each of the principal enclaves would center on a port and depend upon sea communications

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for its supply, and each would include one or more airfields. The spreading-out process from each area would be roughly similar to an inkblot on a sheet of blotting paper.

In time, if the situation in Vietnam called for it, the separate enclaves might spread out to such an extent that they would become connected. Such a process would require far more men than have been assigned to Vietnam. It is estimated that a total of about 500,000 Americans might be needed, and years of fighting might be required.

United States combat troops, now assigned to five enclaves in South Vietnam, might be airlifted to any part of the country to aid the South Vietnamese against the Vietcong.

Salon is finding it difficult to increase the strength of its forces, and Communist attacks in the monsoon season might precipitate an emergency requiring United States troops outside the established enclaves. But conservative military officers would prefer the establishment of secure bases first, and then a gradual extension of the area.

Marines in Three Areas

Today, there are a total of about 14,600 combat marines in South Vietnam, and 3,500 Army paratroops.

Members of the Third Marine Division are stationed in three areas. Three infantry battalions, all reinforced with artillery, tanks, engineers and other units, plus a Hawk antiaircraft battalion, are guarding the important Danang air base, in the north, and the port area that supplies it.

Three more battalions have just established a beachhead at Chulal, 52 miles farther south, where United States Navy sea-

bees, with some Vietnamese labor, are rapidly building an aluminum-matting airstrip.

One Marine battalion is guarding a small airstrip and an important communications facility at Phubal, near Hue, 25 miles north of Danang.

The airborne troops are in two locations—guarding the important airstrip at Bienhoa, near Saigon, and around a port facility at Vungtau, 18 miles away. The Bienhoa position, which is inland, is regarded as an integral part of the Vungtau-Saigon-Bienhoa enclave.

Congestion Is a Problem

Major requirements in South Vietnam since the United States has intensified its use of air power have been greater security for the available air bases and more facilities to relieve congestion at them.

Attempts by the Vietnamese to relieve congestion and to provide revetments and dispersed parking places for aircraft have proceeded slowly. Revetments at Bienhoa were still incomplete and planes were parked wingtip to wingtip when bomb explosions occurred there this week. Bienhoa was subjected to a mortar attack by the Vietcong last November.

The United States has assumed the responsibility for constructing a new hard-paved runway at Danang and an aluminum-matting strip and later a hard-surfaced runway at Chulal. Three Marine A-4 light attack squadrons will be stationed at Chulal when the field is completed.

Two other coastal points of considerable importance appear to be earmarked for future development as ports and possibly air bases, and the necessary build-up of supplies has already started. These are the Quinhon and the Nha Trang-Camranh Bay area, both near important coastal road junctions and both good ports. Camranh Bay, south of Nha Trang, was a French naval base and is one of the finest fleet anchorages in Southeast Asia.

Administration Steps Up Pressure to Force End of Aid to Guerrillas

By MAX FRANKEL

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, March 15—

The United States attack on North Vietnam today was another attempt to increase the pressure by which Washington hopes to force Hanoi to end its support of the Communist insurgency in South Vietnam.

It was meant to be the most potent and threatening in the series of raids that began Feb. 7. The attacks are being intensified geographically by a choice of targets progressively closer to the North Vietnamese capital.

The raids are designed to prove that North Vietnam will suffer increasingly serious punishment if it continues to support the Vietcong. They are meant to evoke some sign that Hanoi wishes to avoid that punishment and that it is "prepared to stop its aggression."

Respite Is Indicated

Thus far, officials reiterated, there has been no such sign but the indications were that Washington would now give North Vietnam a few days' respite for further diplomatic activity.

By flying for the first time within the range of MIG fighter planes stationed near Hanoi, the United States also wished to demonstrate that it was prepared to take on the defending jets. Some of them were said to have been in the air but not near the attacking planes.

Apparently, confident that North Vietnam as well as its allies, the Soviet Union and Communist China, understand the purpose and meaning of the pressure, the Administration said nothing to explain today's strikes against a nation with which it remains, nomi-

Continued on Page 3, Column 1

U.S. IS TIGHTENING SQUEEZE ON HANOI

Continued From Page 1, Col. 3

nally at peace. After a White House conference with President Johnson, military leaders described the attack as "successful," but genuine success, in the Administration's view, requires political as well as military results.

At some stage in the pressure, officials have said, the raids may be extended from strictly military to industrial installations.

By selecting targets at will, the United States also hoped to demonstrate the insufficiency of North Vietnam's defenses and to underscore the apparent inability or reluctance of either Moscow or Peking to give it effective assistance.

The belief here is that some of these aspects of its position are beginning to be understood in Hanoi. But there has been no direct response to Washington's invitation for an "indication" of a willingness to come to terms.

Today's raids were among several subjects discussed at a 90-minute White House conference this afternoon by President Johnson, Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara and the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

They heard a report from Gen. Harold K. Johnson, the Army Chief of Staff, who has just returned from Saigon.

Morale Said to Be Good

After the meeting, General Johnson said he thought the attacks on North Vietnam had "given pause to think a little" in Hanoi without yet affecting the course of the war in South Vietnam. Morale among Americans and South Vietnamese, he said, is good.

Despite reports from Saigon that General Johnson, among others, favored the assignment of large numbers of United States combat troops to South Vietnam—possibly as many as a division of more than 15,000 men—there was no sign that the Administration was prepared to endorse such a move now.

Asked whether more troops were being prepared for Vietnam duty, General Johnson said, "no specific combat forces at this stage." Several South Vietnamese sources have also been predicting larger American troop assignments, but officials here describe these reports as a result of advocacy rather than policy.

After the military conference, the White House announced that Maxwell D. Taylor, the United States Ambassador to South Vietnam, would return home in two to four weeks for consultations.

WAR-GAS DEBATE STIRS COMMONS

Wilson Parries Criticism—
Many Nations Aroused

By CLYDE H. FARNSWORTH
Special to The New York Times

LONDON, March 23—British anxiety over United States policies in South Vietnam was demonstrated today in 10 dramatic minutes in the House of Commons.

Prime Minister Harold Wilson was asked about the Americans' use of nonlethal gas and napalm in Vietnam and about a statement attributed to Maxwell D. Taylor, the United States Ambassador in Saigon, that the United States might extend the war without limit.

The Prime Minister, declaring that his Government desired a "lasting and robust" peace in Vietnam, said he was seeking elucidation of the Taylor statement, which goes "considerably further than anything I have told the House."

He continued: "Obviously, one must be concerned to find out what the facts are. I am not going to say here and now that this has been said by General Taylor. We must check on this statement."

A dispatch from Saigon to The Daily Telegraph reported that Mr. Taylor had said that there was no limit to the potential increase of the war in Vietnam and that America might directly enter the ground fighting.

Later Mr. Wilson said Washington had not informed him of its intention to use gas and napalm, or jellied-gasoline bombs.

Wilson Is Noncommittal

Mr. Wilson, fielding about a dozen questions in a packed chamber, declined to commit himself on the use of temporarily disabling types of tear gas against the Vietcong.

He said he was sure that members of Parliament, concerned about the use of gas or napalm, were equally concerned about the whole question of fighting in the area.

That is why Foreign Secretary Michael Stewart, is in Washington to discuss the whole Vietnam situation with Secretary of State Dean Rusk, he said.

"Any view we may have," Mr. Wilson said, "are better expressed through the Foreign Secretary to the American Government rather than by statements made in this house."

Mr. Wilson is under pressure from the left wing of the Labor party to dissociate Britain from American actions. At the same time he believes that any break made by Britain need not necessarily influence Washington's policy.

Sir Alec Douglas-Home, leader of the Conservative Opposition, said the word "gas" aroused great emotions after

would violate international agreements.

Fourteen Labor party Members of Parliament spent an hour at the United States Embassy with William Brubeck, political counselor.

Eric Heffer of Liverpool, leader of the delegation, said the group felt that the use of gas and napalm could make the situation worse.

West Germans Disturbed

Special to The New York Times

BONN, March 23—The United States' use of gas in the Vietnam war was deplored unanimously today by the West German press.

Newspapers of all political shades agreed that the United States was at best inviting a severe propaganda setback and at worst risking lethal gas warfare.

The Government declined any comment.

Algiers Fears Nuclear War

Special to The New York Times

ALGIERS, March 23—The United States' use of gas in South Vietnam has been overshadowed in the Algerian press by reports that some top United States generals favor the use of atomic weapons.

Kenya Is Unimpressed

Special to The New York Times

NAIROBI, Kenya, March 23—Reports on the use of disabling gases against the Vietcong, were printed in newspapers here but appeared to make no impression on politicians or the public. Kenya's overriding concern is a prolonged drought and the resulting shortages of milk and butter.

Arabs' Reaction Mixed

Special to The New York Times

BEIRUT, Lebanon, March 23—Arab politicians reacted today to the use of gas in South Vietnam according to their political outlooks.

Those hostile to the United States saw in it a first step toward more horrible weapons, including poisonous gas. Others, more friendly to the United States, said gas was more humane than bullets.

Asahi Says U.S. Loses Friends

TOKYO, March 23 (Reuters)

—The mass-circulation newspaper Asahi said today that the United States had "lost many friends in Japan" by using gas in Vietnam. Asahi charged that the United States was using Asians as guinea pigs for chemical experiments.

It added that the action would have a "delicate effect" on the United States-Japanese security treaty.

Seoul Supports Decision

Special to The New York Times

SEOUL, South Korea, March 23—No hostile reaction to the employment of gas against the

cong's brute methods of terrorism."

'Crime,' Peking Declares

PEKING, March 23 (Reuters)

—Communist China today described the use of gas in South Vietnam as a "monstrous crime committed by the United States aggressors to retrieve their defeat."

Hsinhua, the official press agency, said that Washington's admission of the use of "poison gas" had evoked worldwide condemnation.

Hanoi Aide Sees 'Barbarity'

TOKYO, March 23 (AP)

—Lo Trang, chief of North Vietnam's Information Department, charged today that the United States was using "poison gas" against the Vietcong in violation of international law.

As quoted in a Chinese Communist broadcast, Mr. Trang added: "I strongly condemn this barbarity of U. S. imperialism" and appeal to all progressive people of the world to rouse public opinion everywhere to stay the bloody hands of U.S. imperialism."

U.N. Envoys Concerned

Special to The New York Times

UNITED NATIONS, N. Y., March 23—Delegates of all shades of opinion seemed disturbed today over the use of gas in Vietnam.

The delegates were unwilling to speak publicly. In general, those of Western countries expressed doubts about the wisdom of using any form of gas because of the effect on world opinion.

A typical remark was: "It sounds bad, and if it does not kill them, what is the purpose of using it?"

A Communist delegate shrugged his shoulders and said: "No matter what kind it is, nobody had expected to hear of a civilized country using gas in war in these days. It sounds like World War I."

U.S. BOMBS RADAR IN NORTH VIETNAM

For First Time, Pilots Hunt
Targets on Their Own in
Armed Reconnaissance

By SETH S. KING

Special to The New York Times

SAIGON, South Vietnam, March 22 — United States planes attacked a radar station 60 miles inside North Vietnam today in carrying out an armed reconnaissance of roads for the first time in this war.

A United States military spokesman said one of the eight 105 Thunderchiefs that had taken part in the raid had been shot down but the pilot had been picked up safely from the South China Sea by a rescue amphibian.

The spokesman described route reconnaissance as a mission in which fighter-bombers fly above enemy roads in search of military targets. If they find such a target they attack it, he explained.

He said today's route reconnaissance was the first to be made over any part of North Vietnam.

Comment Withheld

In the past United States and South Vietnamese planes have conducted only carefully planned raids on military targets that have been reconnoitered and photographed previously.

When asked if there would be more armed route reconnaissance missions in North Vietnam, the spokesman said he could not comment.

The target hit today was an early warning radar station at Vinhson, 60 miles north of the 17th Parallel, which divides North Vietnam from South Vietnam. The station is 30 miles from Donghoi, a naval base that was one of 11 targets struck in previous raids.

A military spokesman said three armed junks near the radar station had fired on United States jets. The fire was returned and the three junks were sunk.

Heavy Damage Reported

Returning pilots reported that the radar station had been "virtually destroyed." They said ground fire had been light to moderately steady. The weather was perfect for flying.

For the first time no formal statement on the purpose of the raid was given. A United States Embassy spokesman said only that the attack was "our response to their continued aggression."

In military action in South Vietnam, a United States military spokesman reported, Government forces scored another victory yesterday when they killed 28 Vietcong guerrillas and captured 28 others in Kienhoa Province, 50 miles south of Saigon.

Contact with the Vietcong

Continued on Page 4, Column

U.S. Planes, Hunting Targets, Bomb North Vietnamese Radar

Continued From Page 1, Col. 7

was made during a search and destroy operation. A battalion of Government troops was lifted by helicopter to the area.

One Vietcong squad, in a rare move, surrendered after its leader was killed.

A large-scale attack was started this morning 10 miles southwest of the large United States air base at Danang, where American Marines are dug in.

Acting on reports that the area contained a Vietcong training camp, 17 American bombers and fighters struck it. Soon after, 58 helicopters took elements of several Government battalions to the village of Dongnghe, near the camp. By late this afternoon no contact had been made with the guerrillas.

Off Binhduh Province on the coast of central Vietnam a motorized junk that reportedly fired on an observation plane yesterday was towed into Quinhon harbor today by a Vietnamese naval vessel.

The junk had been strafed by South Vietnamese Air Force planes after it was said to have fired on the observation plane.

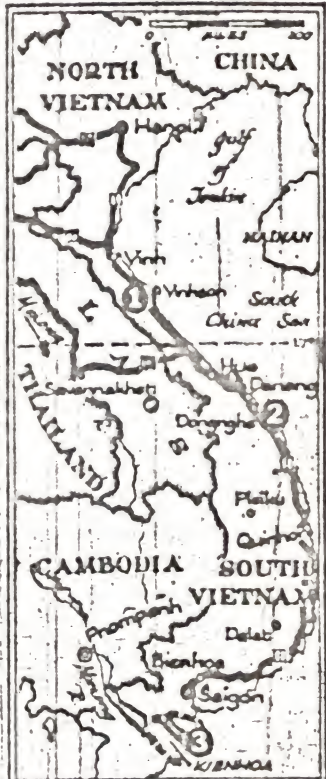
Fifteen persons on board were killed and nine others drowned. Vietnamese officials said later that "apparently valid" papers found aboard the vessel had given it permission to sail to Nhatrang. Three of those killed were in Government army uniforms.

An investigation was being made of a statement by the province chief that the suspected Vietcong on board fired at the plane and then discarded their weapons and swam ashore.

In a speech tonight to the Saigon Lion's Club, the United States Ambassador, Maxwell D. Taylor, declared that any negotiations with North Vietnam that would permit the Communists to enjoy the fruits of their terrorism or leave them in a dominant position in the South would "be an affront to justice and humanity."

"The thief who forces his way into a home at pistol point, harassing the householders, stealing and destroying, does not acquire thereby any moral right to bargain with the police," General Taylor said.

The landing of marines at Danang demonstrated United States willingness to use its ground combat forces to protect



The New York Times March 22, 1965
U.S. aircraft struck at Vinhson (1) and Dongnghe (2). Saigon's troops won a battle in Kienhoa. (3).

such a vital spot as the air base, he said.

American air attacks on North Vietnam were in response to Communist aggression, he said.

"This response will be increased further in proportion to the requirements," he asserted.

'Decisive Point' Seen

Special to The New York Times

SAIGON, March 22 — Ambassador Maxwell D. Taylor said tonight the war in Vietnam might be approaching a "decisive point." He seemed to say, in effect, that if the Communists thought the current bombings of North Vietnamese installations were bad they hadn't seen anything yet.

In a speech to the Lion's Club he said that what had been done so far "is public knowledge." What the future holds is something for the North Vietnamese to worry about, he added.

FULL COMBAT ROLE FOR G.I.'S IS LIKELY IN VIETNAM SOON

U. S. Commanders Prepare to Commit Troops—Attack on Vietcong Base Opens

By JACK LANGGUTH

Special to The New York Times

SAIGON, South Vietnam, May 17—United States political and military officers here agree that any meaningful talks with North Vietnam on the war will not be possible until the Vietcong's expected summer offensive is halted.

They believe that North Vietnamese military leaders will be persuaded to enter negotiations only if they have been shown that the major offensive has failed.

For that reason, little optimism has been heard here that the pause in air strikes against the north, now in its fifth day, would lead to any change in Hanoi's policy.

[Six South Vietnamese battalions totaling more than 2,000 men opened an attack on the Vietcong jungle stronghold of Balong about 20 miles south of the North Vietnamese border, Reuters reported.]

U. S. Troops Ready

Some Western analysts here have noted recently a slight shift toward the positions of the Soviet Union in the published statements of North Vietnam. But they do not interpret the change as a sign that Hanoi is prepared to relinquish its efforts in South Vietnam.

To meet the expected Communist military offensive in the south, American commanders here are preparing to send American combat troops, now on guard duty at three air bases, into battle anywhere in Vietnam.

This full participation is expected to begin shortly.

The public reaction that this expanded use of American troops is likely to have both in Vietnam and the United States is being weighed.

Prepare for More Men

Their use has been dictated by the serious shortage of Vietnamese Government reserve forces. A program has been under way for months to raise 100,000 or more additional regular and paramilitary soldiers. But the date for completion of the build-up has been advanced to the middle of next year.

As much as possible the American military strategists want to keep the United States paratroopers and marines out of areas heavily populated with Vietnamese civilians.

There is also the likelihood that the first use of Americans in the expanded combat role would come during a crisis in

Continued on Page 3, Column 2

Continued From Page 1, Col. 5

which Vietnamese troops were pinned down by superior numbers of Vietcong. The Americans would then be dispatched as relief troops, a role that critics would be hard put to protest.

The American logistics team now operating in South Vietnam is laying the groundwork for quick and efficient reception of many more American troops if the need arises during the Communist offensive.

The precautions have been made more necessary by new intelligence reports that thousands of North Vietnamese soldiers have massed on the Laotian border near South Vietnam's Central Highlands.

At Bienhoa, where an accident Sunday took more American lives than any Vietcong attack or terrorist incident, the toll seemed likely to reach 27 Americans dead.

Five of the 10 undetonated bombs left near the air base runway yesterday have now exploded, one from its own delayed action fuse and four from the efforts of demolition teams.

As the bodies are identified, the United States is declaring the men dead. For that reason, the total today was changed to five killed and 22 missing with little expectation that the missing would be found alive.

In the series of explosions of bombs loaded onto B-57 Canberra jets for an attack on the Vietcong 103 American servicemen were injured, two severely.

An investigation team from the Defense Department arrived here tonight to study the incident.

U. S. Declines to Comment

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, May 17—Defense Department officials declined today to confirm or deny reports that American

U.P.I. Clients Are Told Parleys On Vietnam Offer Best Way Out

Vietnam was a leading subject when more than 700 editors and publishers gathered yesterday in the grand ballroom of the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel for the annual breakfast of United Press International, held in conjunction with the convention of the American Newspaper Publishers Association.

A changed view in Washington of the conflict was reported by Stewart Hensley, the news agency's chief diplomatic correspondent in the capital. Donald J. Brydon, who as its Asia news manager recently spent four weeks in South Vietnam, said it appeared neither side in the war there could win a decisive victory, making a negotiated settlement "the best bet."

Combat Forces Preparing

Mims Thomason, president of the wire service, told the gathered subscribers that the agency's clients all over the world had increased in the last year by 220 to a total of 6,066. He paid tribute to its retiring president and editor, Earl J. Johnson, whose successor in both posts, H. Roger Tatarian, presided at the breakfast.

Mr. Hensley said it was obvious by last December "that the South Vietnamese, despite steadily increased military assistance and thousands of fighting American advisers, were not winning the war and had no prospect of doing so."

Preparations are now being made, he said, "to introduce United States combat forces on a very large scale" if and when

it seemed advisable. The Administration hopes, he said, that this, "coupled with a slightly more sophisticated diplomatic approach," will persuade the Communists to stop fighting.

According to Mr. Hensley, the next month or two may decide whether peace talks can begin. If they do not, he said, "the peril of a major war in the area increases."

Mr. Brydon said there have been difficulties with both South Vietnamese and United States authorities over news coverage.

He said the "self-imposed censorship on certain aspects" sought by American military leaders was "almost impossible," considering that it involved agreement of "200 correspondents of varying nationalities and political faiths."

The problems are being worked out and "the situation is much improved," he reported.

Mr. Brydon said the present civilian government in Saigon had the best chance for creating political stability of any regime since the overthrow of President Ngo Dinh Diem in 1963.

United Press International now has 15 men and one woman working in South Vietnam compared with only five in Saigon two years ago, according to Mr. Brydon.

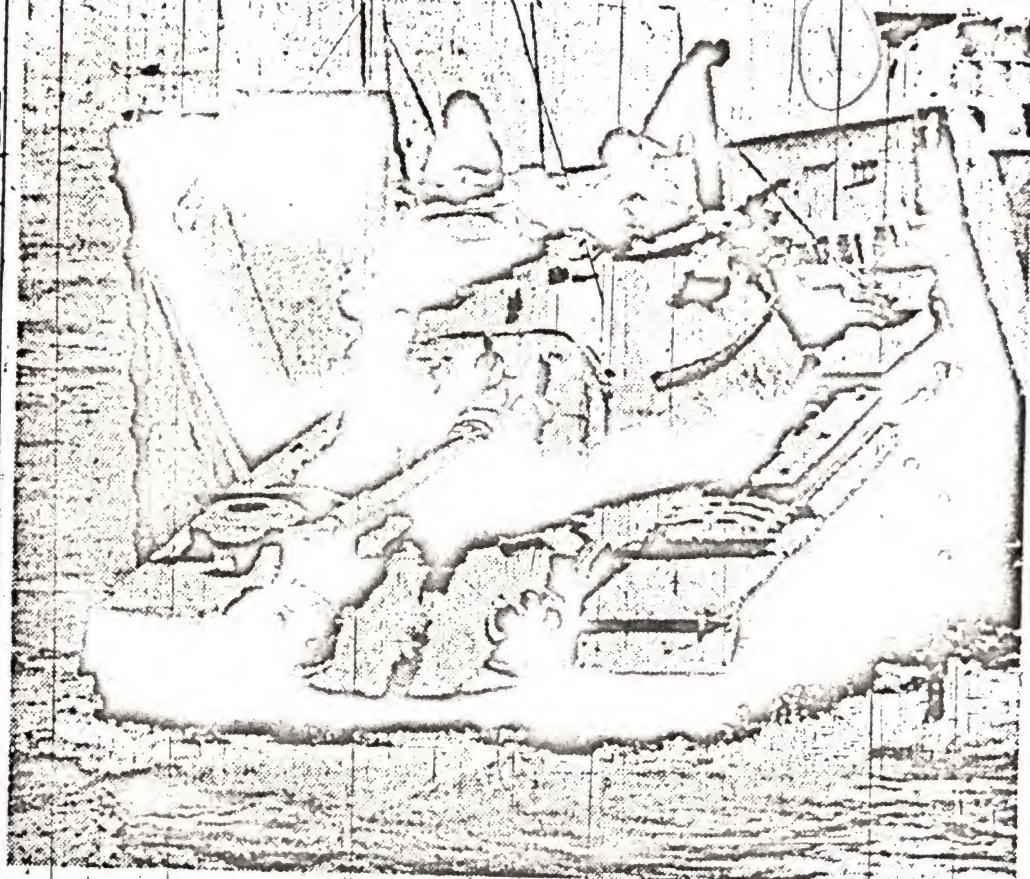
"I expect we will have additional communication facilities there," he added. "If the story continues to build in intensity, as I am sure it will,"

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P. 1

Marine Units Join the Build-Up at Bases in Vietnam



United Press International Radiophoto

Marine Corps tank going ashore from a Seventh Fleet landing craft yesterday at Danang

By United Press International
DANANG, South Vietnam, April 10—Advance elements of a Marine Corps jet fighter squadron landed at the air base here today. They are part of the growing Marine task force in South Vietnam, which is to number about 7,000 men. The jets arrived

shortly after the first of two additional 1,400-men battalions came ashore with tanks 10 miles north of here to bolster the Ninth United States Marine Expeditionary Brigade. The four F-4 Phantom fighters arrived after a five-hour flight from an undisclosed base in the Pacific.

The 1,600-mile-an-hour jets were led by Lieut. Col. William McGraw of St. Louis, commander of Fighter Aircraft Squadron 531. He said the rest of his twin-jet fighters were expected tomorrow. There are about 18 craft in

Continued on Page 4, Column 1